

Considerable discussion has been going on in the English papers in reference to Mr. Robertson's new comedy of "School" and its claim to originality. The comedy was at first enthusiastically praised on account of its novelty and freshness, but a correspondent of the London *Times* showed that its plot was entirely drawn from a German play called "Aschenbrödel;" whereupon Mr. Dion Boucicault hurries into print in defence of Mr. Robertson—prompted very naturally by a fellow-feeling—and insists that this "ridiculous cant about originality should be exploded." What the "ridiculous cant" is, does not seem quite clear—unless it is that play-makers must be allowed to beg, borrow, or appropriate, where they list and how they list, and the critics to accept what is offered in thankfulness and peace. Mr. Boucicault claims that the language of "School" is original, and cites a host of authorities to prove that in rehabilitating a drama from foreign or remote sources, Mr. Robertson has not transcended the law and the custom of the stage. Mr. Boucicault's letter has brought out numerous other correspondents, some in defence of and some in opposition to his arguments. The writer, it seems to us, forgot or ignored the

real issue. It is Mr. Robertson's reticence and want of candor that are justly complained of. The comedy of "School" was specially praised for exactly that quality which was derived from the foreign origin. Every one who is acquainted with the comedies of "Caste" and "Ours"—which we consider the purest and best productions in recent dramatic literature—would expect to find in a new drama from the same pen the taste, skill, and genuine power, for which those plays are so justly noted; but, when something is shown to have been concealed, a distrust arises which must necessarily qualify the public praise.

Mr. Robertson's new comedy of "School," now acting so successfully in London, New York, and Boston, may be cited to disprove a common impression, that the stage of the period is entirely given over to sensation. This little comedy is almost a revelation in dramatic literature. With a plot very slight, with no stirring incident, almost without a situation, dealing, in a thoroughly realistic way, with ordinary life, it yet has achieved the greatest dramatic success of the season. This is to be attributed to its truthful characters, its charming pictures of life, and the highly skilful way in which ordinary incidents are rendered dramatic and effective. The public taste is not so low as it is continually asserted to be. In people's eagerness to be entertained, they are not always, it is true, discriminating. Their likings, moreover, are catholic, and the very persons who to-night are dazzled by the glittering splendors of a "Black Crook," to-morrow may be subdued by the simple pathos of a story like that of "School." The success of this play is proof of the popular sympathy for a pure and elegant drama, and de-

prives actors and managers of all excuse for offering the lewd, the coarse, or the sensational.

